

What's it like? That's the question that a **simile** answers. A simile is a comparison of two unlike things, often using the word like or as. Writers use similes to create unusual images and to help us see qualities or features in a new way.

Notice the similes in the following sentences.

In the dark, the flashlight beam shone like a yellow sword.

Raindrops as big as quarters splashed on the windowpane.

The first simile emphasizes the thinness and sharpness of the beam of light; the second describes the size of raindrops. When you read a simile, notice the images that it leaves in your mind.

Read the following poem twice. The first time through, read it for meaning. The second time, look for and underline similes.

maggie and milly and molly and may
E. E. Cummings

maggie and milly and molly and may
went down to the beach (to play one day)
and maggie discovered a shell that sang
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and

millic befriended a stranded star
whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles:and

may came home with a smooth round stone as
small as a world and as large as alone.

For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find in the sea

A **metaphor**, like a simile, is a comparison of two unlike things.

Metaphors, however, do not include the words *like* or *as*. Metaphors are compact. They let authors pack a great deal of meaning into only a few words, and they encourage readers to develop their own ideas about the things being compared.

Notice the comparisons in the metaphors below:

Love is a rose.

Above our camp arched the sky, a blue bowl of light.

The first metaphor compares love to a rose. The second compares the sky to a bowl. Each metaphor suggests ideas about the things being compared. For example, you might read "Love is a rose" and recall that a rose can be thorny as well as beautiful. What might this metaphor suggest about love?

In "Grape Sherbet," the poet recalls a special dessert that her father made at a family Memorial Day barbecue. Read the poem at least twice. Look for metaphors, and circle each one that you find. In your response notes, write the things that each metaphor compares. (See if you can spot a simile too.)

Grape Sherbet **Rita Dove**

The day? Memorial.
After the grill
Dad appears with his masterpiece—
swirled snow, gelled light.
We cheer. The recipe's
a secret and he fights
a smile, his cap turned up
so the bib resembles a duck.

That morning we galloped
through the grassed-over mounds
and named each stone
for a lost milk tooth. Each dollop
of sherbet, later,
is a miracle,
like salt on a melon that makes it sweeter.

Everyone agrees—it's wonderful!
It's just how we imagined lavender
would taste. The diabetic grandmother
stares from the porch,
a torch
of pure refusal.

We thought no one was lying
there under our feet,
we thought it
was a joke. I've been trying
to remember the taste,
but it doesn't exist.
Now I see why
you bothered,
father.

Personification is a comparison in which a nonhuman thing is given human traits. By using personification, authors can make even ordinary objects come to life. Example:

Wind laughs around the corners of the buildings.

The wind can't really laugh, of course. But by using personification, the author makes the wind seem cheerful and playful. What characteristics about the wind might the following example of personification suggest?

Outside, the cold wind whined and complained.

In "'The Fox and the Crow,'" it is not the wind but two animals that are given human traits. As you read, note ways in which these animals seem human.

The Fox and the Crow
Aesop

.A crow was sitting on the branch of a tree with a stolen piece of cheese in her beak. A fox stood nearby and watched her, wishing to get hold of the cheese. The fox came closer, and standing beneath the tree, he began to compliment the crow on her size and beauty. He went so far as to say that she could be Queen of the Birds if only she had a voice., The crow, anxious to prove that she did possess a voice, began to caw vigorously. When she opened her beak, the cheese, of course, dropped to the ground. The fox pounced upon it and carried, it off, remarking as he went away, "My good friend Crow, you have many good qualities; now try to get some common sense."